# The Interaction of Political Islam with Democracy: The Political Platform of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a Case Study

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## Abstract

*This research aims at contextualizing the rising and complex relationship between political movements and democracy in the light of recent parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt. The 'Arab Spring' in 2011 inaugurated new phase and new era not only in Egypt but also in the whole Arab World whereby it has been characterized by new waves of democratization, Islamization and conservative liberalization. After gaining majority seats in the Egyptian parliament and winning the presidency office, Muslim Brotherhood movement emerged as a cutting edge political force in the Egyptian political system as well as in the Egyptian society in general. In this regard, this paper is an attempt to shed lights on and to trace the legal, political and religious justifications and connotations given by the Muslim Brotherhood for their rule in Egypt internally and externally. After a brief description of the factors and reasons that stood behind the rise of contemporary Islamism, the article goes a step further to explore the adaptive nature of Muslim Brotherhood under the former authoritarian regime. The pragmatism of Muslim Brotherhood was further tested during Al-Tahrir Square revolution and later on their approval and consent to participate in the national election under the military rule.*

## Introduction

The 'Arab Spring', which in effect began with the toppling of the authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt in the early months of 2011, has forced the Arab states to face many challenges even before democratic regimes have replaced the old authoritarian ones. In Tunisia and Egypt, the overthrow of the regime had the consensus support of the entire opposition, as well as the youth and other segments of society. However, the revolutions were followed by intense debates about the character of the new regime to be established. Even while the protests were in progress, the demonstrators called for the establishment of a civic democratic regime that would respect citizens' political freedoms and be based on equal citizenship, with no distinction of religion, sex, or class.

Against the backdrop of these discussions, various political groups, spanning the Egyptian and Tunisian political spectrum, emerged and sought to have a say in determining the nature and format of the new regime. As we know, events unfolded at different rates in Tunisia and in Egypt. In Egypt, new political movements were formed after the Military Council eased the restrictions on the formation of political parties; political figures began declaring their intention to run for president office even before a date was set for the presidential elections. The Egyptian Military Council also introduced a number of amendments to the Egyptian constitution, with the focus on the sections related to the electoral process and election procedures. In a national referendum; 72% of the voters approved the amendments. Parliamentary elections were set for November 2011.

This process made the internal Egyptian debate about the future of the regime in post-revolutionary Egypt more acute; their position on these amendments divided the Egyptian political system into two main camps. The first camp included the various Islamist groups (the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Salafi* movements, both moderate and extremist, and other independent Islamist groups), while the second camp included secular movements, parties, and groups, leftwing liberals, and young leaders of the revolution, such as the 'Revolutionary Youth Alliance' and the 'Revolutionary Youth Union'. The first camp favored the amendments, whereas members of the latter voted against them on different political and ideological grounds.

The main argument advanced by those opposed to the amendments was that they did not meet the expectations raised by the "successful Egyptian revolution."   The opponents asserted that the amendments were based on the old Egyptian constitution, which was fundamentally undemocratic and basically illiberal; likewise, the amendments were limited in scope and in nature and did not relate to the essence of the regime . Moreover, they argued, the Egyptian constitution had "fallen" with the regime; the proper course of action was to draft a new constitution instead of amending the old one. They maintained further that holding parliamentary elections in September (2011)-January (2012) would not give candidates—especially those representing the Revolutionary Youth—sufficient time to prepare. This would significantly boost the traditional parties, especially those affiliated with political Islam, which was the dominant force with the best infrastructure for contesting the parliamentary elections, thanks to its social, organizational, and institutional network and the large financial reserves at its disposal. The Revolutionary Youth, on the other hand, would not have enough time to gear up and establish themselves by September, especially because they were still focused on consolidating the achievements of the revolution.

Those who favored the amendments, primarily the Islamist camp, did so for a number of reasons. First, because the Islamist groups were already prepared to run for parliament and were sure that they would win a significant share of the vote. The second reason was ideological regarding the status of religion in the post revolution regime. Even before it was decided which articles of the constitution would be amended, a heated debate broke out in Egyptian society—one that will continue until a new constitution is written—about the status of Article II: "The principles of Islamic law are the chief source of legislation."   Because the Islamist camp wanted to keep this article in the constitution, they had a strong motivation to vote in favor of the amendments before the election of a new parliament that would draft a new constitution. Therefore, the difference between the secular and Islamist camps was that the former wanted a new constitution before the elections, in order to define the state's religious neutrality, whereas the latter wanted to defer the constitution-drafting process until after the September-January elections, because they believed that their influence on the substance of the document would be much greater then.

This debate, which became increasingly fierce when the Islamist camp abandoned the street protests after the revolution, poses a major challenge for the democratization of post-revolutionary Egypt. The way in which the Islamist current camps integrates into the new regime is one of the most important challenges for the establishment of democracy in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood, along with the other Islamic factions in Egypt, serves as a model for Islamic movements elsewhere in the Arab world and around Muslim countries. Egypt's willingness to make strides towards democracy could prove favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood and lead to their becoming part of the new regime. Thus, one might argue that how political Islam conducts itself in Egypt could well influence political Islam as a whole, especially in the Arab world and in other countries in which political Islam is inspiring to be main stream political force.

At this point it is very important to examine the challenge that political Islam poses to the establishment of democracy in Egypt. As a major force in the public arena, it is pertinent to ask whether political Islam will curb democratization in Egypt and even tries to confine it within limits that it can live with. Perhaps, though, political Islam has internalized the lessons of the Egyptian revolution and will favor the establishment of a fully democratic civic regime. Will political Islamic speak about the character it seeks for the new regime in terms
Identical to those employed by the secular movements and their advocates? Will political Islam be willing to accept separation of religion and state in Egypt? These are important issues and crucial questions, because this is the first time in Egyptian history that political Islam has had to address them as a serious contender for control of the state, with direct influence on its policies. In the past, the discourse about democracy conducted by political Islam, which was always an opposition force, existed in isolation from any real option of replacing the regime or even integrating into the power structure of the state; it focused, instead, on enhancing its image as freedom-loving democratic force.

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[1] *al-Shuruq newspaper*, March 15, 2011.
[1] Sameh Rashid , "The Arab Spring: the first year". Shoan Arabiya Journal, Journal Of Arab Affairs,  148, pp: 16-27.  2011 (in Arabic).
[1] Interview with Tarek Al-Bishri, the chair of the constitutional amendment committee, "All the amendments that we have set are temporary", Al-Shoruq Newspaper, 4\3\2011, p: 6-7.

Prior to the revolution, political Islam was never a viable alternative to the authoritarian regime, with a real possibility of gaining power through elections. After the regime was overthrown, however, and the preparations to determine the future of the Egyptian system began, political Islam could aspire to lead the state. The ambition to lead or at least be partners in the new regime had become realistic and more pragmatic in nature.

This paper will analyze and discuss the Muslim Brotherhood's 2005 initiative for political reform, which marked the climax of its political development under the Ancient Régime, and compare it with its post-revolutionary political discourse (in February 2011). This paper's primary assertion is that mainstream political Islam—namely, the Muslim Brotherhood—has always attempted to find common ground between its fundamentalist/ religious ideology and democratic values; its chief goal, before the revolution, was to achieve political legitimacy and a political presence in the public sphere, both local and international . The movement did not aspire to achieve power through elections, in as much as that was impossible under the authoritarian regime. Post-revolution, however, its participation in the new regime seems very realistic; that is, mainstream political Islam would be responsible for policy in practice, and not only for discourse on the theoretical plane. This has made it more conservative in its presentation of its political attitude towards democracy and the character of the state and led it to explicit highlight its support for retaining its Islamic character and Islamic mandate.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first presents political Islam's attitude towards democracy while it was in the opposition; that is, the Islamic rhetoric about democracy before the crumbling of the authoritarian regime. Our analysis will be based chiefly on the Muslim Brotherhood's political platform of 2005, the first such document in the movement's history. The second section will analyze the Islamic rhetoric about democracy after the revolution, based on an examination of its new political platform, which was published following the revolution. In the third section, we will present our main insights, thoughts and discussions on the topic.

## *The Rise of Political Fundamentalist Islam*

Some sources consider that the reasons behind the rise of political Islam and the revival of Islamic principles started in the middle of the 19th century when a group of thinkers and innovators such as Jamal Aladdin Al Afghani, Mohammad Abdo, and Mohammad Rashid Rida developed an Islamic trend towards dealing with the advanced world around them. These reformers believed that Islamic peoples were living in hardships because their governments were very weak and unable to protect them against foreign interference. They believed that the best way to treat such situations comes through a logical combination of science and religion, and through comprehensive political, social, and economic reforms based on contemporary understandings and activating scientific and educational institutions. Moreover, Western scholars focused on other factors that stand behind the contemporary Islamic phenomenon. The most important of these are:

First, the problem of contemporary Islam lies in its being a religion and its success all over the globe. In just a century after capturing Mecca (AD630), the Islamic world covered wide parts of the world, from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to China in the east. The Muslims led a prosperous life at the time Europe struggled to awake from ignorance and other hardships. Such heavenly blessing started to change and decline at the beginning of the 15th century, when Europe began to awake from its deep sleep, and spread its influence through technology, military success and new ideas. So some see that the modern Islamic resurrection is just a reaction against the European monopoly in every field and aspect of life. The Muslims were the leaders of the world and they just became victims of foreign American and European intervention.

Second, one of the reasons behind the contemporary Islamic resurrection is the successive military defeats the Muslim countries received from Western Christian countries since the19thcentury, when Ottoman Empire started to disintegrate. The establishment of the Zionist State in Palestine in 1948 was a direct of hatred against Europe. This is because Israel is in reality an American-European project in the center of the Islamic world, and this contributed to transmitting collective feelings of solidarity and support among Muslims.

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[1] Tamim Ahmad, "The current constitution and reproduction of the tribal chief", *Al-Shoruq Newspaper*, 12\3\2011, p:13.

[1] See the official English translation of the Egyptian constitution: http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/default.aspx

Napoleon Bonaparte found himself obliged to send a call for the support of the Jews when leading his campaign against the East in 1799, saying, "Oh, you, the Israelis, the Unique People, France is starching her arm folly to support you, and keeping the tradition of Israel. You …the real legal owners of Palestine" . Muslims will also not forget the bad practices of Europeans countries, especially Britain and France who divided the Arab world into small scattered states by Sykes- Picot treaty of 1916. 1967 is considered by all measures a catastrophic year for all Arabs and Muslims, and a turning point in the Arab- Israeli conflict. In that year, Israel defeated its "Arab enemies" in the Six-Day War. Israel then occupied the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Sinai Peninsula. The occupation of Jerusalem was a severe blow that destroyed the Arab dignity, and self-esteem, and consideration. The cause of Palestine and the liberation of Jerusalem turned from just a regional Arab issue to an Islamic global one that concerns every Muslim.

Third, the Islamic resurrection movement in the 1970's and 1980's came as a reaction to the failure of a group of national as well as socialist attempts after the liberation from foreign monopoly. Nasserism in Egypt, Baathist ideology in Syria and Iraq, Islamic socialism in Libya and Algeria and the Marxist socialism in South Yemen all failed. At the political level, the secular contemporary movements failed in the Islamic world. Neither the liberal nationalists nor the Communists were able to keep their promises or commitments to their peoples. The governments in Islamic states were not interested in establishing a legal political stand for them. On the contrary, they were authoritarian type of government led by dictators and military leaders and the army. Political parties were banned or with just limited activities. Elections were not just and fair. Moreover, financial and administrative corruption became a common phenomenon, in addition to malpractice and mal-distribution of wealth among the rich and the poor. The Islamic movements rejected the Marxist model and refused to adopt it since it was a purely secular atheist type of doctrine. Moreover, capitalism produced a new group of elites and a consuming capitalist society. So the Islamists succeeded in gaining the support of the mainstream by focusing on issues such as unemployment, poverty, and unfair distribution of wealth, in addition to authoritarian systems of dictatorship.

Fourth, the discovery of oil in huge commercial quantities in the Arabian Peninsula, the natural cradle of Islam, made Muslims feel that Islam was starting to gain power and influence as a central power among nations. There are so many factors that gave strength to this trend, as most petrol is found in the center of the Arab world, where the prophet Mohammed received the revelation from God, and established the first Islamic society in the Arabian Peninsula. The revenues from oil partially supported the presence of Islamic organizations worldwide, which supported the spread of Islam all over the world, and led to building mosques in many countries, especially in Central Asia after the liberation from the Russian rule.

Fifth, the new cultural colonialism in the 20th century shocked Muslims in their norms and behaviors. This created a strong and deep psychological shock for Muslims as they found that they were unable to stand against the new atheist global ideology coming from the West, supported by satellite channels, computer technology, the internet and printed materials. This, as a result, created an ideological gap and awakening of belief among the poor in cities. The Islamic awakening especially at the religious and cultural levels produced a new formula that emphasizes Islamic culture and customs, and increased Islamic awareness in confronting the political and economic exploitation of the West and the brain washing ideology. The rise of global powers, strengthened by modern technologies created a cultural debate among Muslims. This started the process of searching for cultural and religious identity in the context of opposing the Western model that stands for confiscating of one's identity and specialty.

### *Political Islam and Democracy in the Era of Authoritarianism*

Democracy, in its modern sense, made its significant appearance in the Islamic discourse in the early 1980's. This was manifested in books, articles, and conferences and symposiums that grappled with the relationship between Islam and democracy, both from the historical and political perspectives and from that of Muslim religious law. Within Islamic thought, a broad array of literature on democracy has emerged. The subject has acquired increasing political, social, and economic weight and has influenced the agenda of the Islamic political movements. During the 1980's and the 1990's, there was an increase in the number of Muslim and Arab Scholars and writers who began to take an interest in the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Some Islamic activists, too, began to demand that the regimes make political reforms and allow for democratic pluralism, centering therefore on the larger human rights and the broader just distribution of wealth in poor such as Egypt. Esposito and Voll (1996) claim that, in the past few decades, Islamists have become interested in two important processes, Islamization and democratization, which they see as exerting a strong influence on the political development of the Arab and Muslim worlds together. From the perspective of political Islam, not only are these two processes advancing in parallel; in fact, they need to converge. This is why some Islamic activists demand more democracy and push in this direction: they believe that democratization and the incorporation of political Islam, as a popular stream, can assist the movement in its mission to Islamize society and the state and galvanize more ordinary people around this goal. Sadiki (2004) argues further that, according to political Islam, Islamization is not meant to thwart democratization—nor is democratization supposed to prevent Islamization. Rather, each process should strengthen the other.

That is, as political Islam becomes stronger, it will demand increasing political reforms and democracy. And as democratization spreads, Islamic political movements will be the main winner as the moderate Islamic groups and movements are having more winning cards in their hands that other secular, liberal and leftist groups and parties. In his study, "Democracy in Muslim Discourse in Modern Times," Zaki Ahmed presents an anthology of Islamist writings on democracy. According to him, since the eighties '…the issue of democracy has been presented in loud and animated  tones in the contemporary Islamic discourse, at a different rate of historical, philosophical, political, and linguistic understanding and analysis, in which one can see a change of direction in the Islamists' political views about this topic. Kramer counters, however, that even though Islamists have begun to espouse democratic dogmas, they remain faithful to the belief that Islam encompasses both religion and state in such complementary and smooth model. In other words, democracy must exist within the framework of this equation, or democracy as procedural issue could coexist with much broader Islamic model.

El-Solh (1993) categorizes political Islam's attitude to democracy into three main groups. The first group is completely opposed to the democratic regime from purely theological and religious perspective. The second group believes that Islam embodies democratic elements and they should be cultivated; they note in particular the concept of *al-shura* (consultation) practiced in the Islamic context since the time of Prophet Mohammed till the present time but with varying degrees and magnitudes. The third group is willing to adopt Western democracy and believes that the democratic theory that has been applied in other places can succeed in Muslim society as well and that Muslim societies are not exceptional to that. In this section, we will focus on the Muslim Brotherhood's initiatives for political reform in Egypt in 2005. This initiative was the Egyptian movement's first political platform of its type since its founding; it reflects, among other things, the Brotherhood's tendency to increased integration with the existing regime. In March 2004, the movement's then–General Guide, Mohammad Mahdi 'Aqef, presented the Brotherhood's platform, with its proposals for political reforms in Egypt. In an interview, Aqef explained that the platform was intended to present the movement's nationalistic and Islamic views on the issues associated with political reform, such as democracy and elections and the status of the various branches of government and the future interaction between Islamization and democratization in the Egyptian society.

Through this proposal, the Muslim Brotherhood also wanted to present to the Egyptians with its general political perspective on the general state of the country in advance of the elections in 2005. The platform comprised an introduction and thirteen chapters, which discussed various issues and proposed improvements and modifications on some existing points. These topics were not only political; they also included social, economic, and cultural issues, and, most importantly, reforms associated with democratization and the essence and structure of the regime and peaceful transition of Egypt to full- fledged working democracy. Areas for improvement included: strengthening civic society; reforming the regime, the judicial system, and the election process; instituting reforms in education, scientific research, and at Al Azhar University; pursuing economic reform and battling poverty; introducing social reforms, including those linked with the status of women and the Coptic Orthodox Christian minority; introducing cultural reforms; and modifying foreign policy and orienting its foreign relations and determinants in connection with the near region and the outside world.

According to the Muslim Brotherhood's platform, implementing the political reform project requires unification of all of the political forces in Egypt. The government cannot carry out and lead political reform by itself, without the cooperation of the other political actors in the state, mainly political parties, media, public opinion, civil society and the trade unions.

Below we will present several sections of the Brotherhood's plan for political reform, which testify to their ideological evolution, adjustment to democratic values, and willingness to be involved in democratization. The movement defined its ideal political regime in this way: "We favor a democratic, constitutional, parliamentary republic, within the framework of Islamic values." This introduction is compatible with the Egyptian constitution's definition of the regime as a constitutional republic. The Egyptian constitution defines Muslim religious law as the chief source of state jurisprudence. That is, the Muslim Brotherhood concurs with the Egyptian constitution's definition of the regime—an important step in its adjustment to the values of the current system. Democracy became a central issue in the Muslim Brotherhood's proposed substantial political reform. The platform states that Egypt's independence, strength, international standing, and freedom to make political decisions cannot possibly be realized without a democratic regime with wider popular base of grassroots.

Furthermore, it calls on the political parties to sign a "national covenant" in which they pledge their allegiance to a democratic regime and its values and working principles. In this program, the Muslim Brotherhood favors a direct form of democracy; instead of the Islamic term *al-shura* (consultation), they demonstratively preferred "democracy with parliamentary form and broader Islamic slogans and values."

The national covenant that the Muslim Brotherhood would have all political and ideological streams sign was based on the following principles:

*1.* "The people are the source of authority for all branches of government in the country. No person or party, group or organization has the right to claim exclusive authority unless it derives from the people by their free will." Note that this section openly challenges Sayyid Qutb and his school of thought, which deemed Allah to be the sole source of authority (in the sense of *hakimiya* or divine sovereignty) and held that this role could not be delegated to other sources. This is done purposely to block any freedom – oriented issue to defame or insult religious and holy texts.

*2.* "A commitment to respect the principle of replacing the party in power by means of free and honest elections."

*3.* "A guaranteed of freedom of conscience."

*4.* "A guarantee of freedom of religion for all recognized religions" (meaning the monotheistic faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism).

*5.* A guarantee of freedom of expression: "Freedom of expression must be guaranteed as part of the general order and norms and according to the basic principles of society—guaranteeing freedom of the press and property as the way to achieve freedom of expression." The freedom of expression that the Muslim Brotherhood proposed was limited: this freedom must take account of society's basic principles—but the Brotherhood did not define these principles. However, it is clear that it refers to Egyptian society's religious principles, thereby restricting freedom of expression and setting basic principles and general norms of society, whether traditional or religious, beyond the pale.

*6.* A guarantee of freedom of political organization, including the establishment of parties, and denial to any authority or agency the power to interfere in a way that would obstruct or limit this right: "The independent judicial system is the only agency of government entitled to determine which organizations are opposed to the general order and norms and to the basic principles of society." This point is significant for the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime's refusal to recognize the Brotherhood as a political party, starting in the Nasser era, was one of the main factors that stymied the movement's political development and kept it from becoming a viable political alternative to the ruling party.

*7.* A guarantee of freedom of assembly and of individuals' rights to participate in community activities, as long as they keep the peace and national harmony and security.

*8.* A guarantee of freedom of nonviolent demonstration and protest.

*9.* A guarantee of the right of popular representation through a freely elected parliament, with a fixed term, and its replacement through free elections. Election laws must assure free and honest elections while ensuring the state's neutrality. The most efficient type of regime for state and society is a parliamentary regime, which gives the party that received the most or majority votes' responsibility for forming the government and running the country. Note that the Muslim Brotherhood focused on parliament and the cabinet and did not mention the presidency; in other words, they preferred not to clash with this institution. This can be interpreted in one of two ways: first that the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to stay as far away as possible from any conflict with President Mubarak, at least for the time being, and hence declared that its maximum political aspiration was to form a government, which would deal primarily with domestic issues. The movement was not interested in running a candidate for president. According to the second interpretation, the Brotherhood was interested in a genuine parliamentary regime in which the president has only limited powers. The presidency is mentioned later in the platform, albeit in very general terms.

*10.* Limitation of the powers held by president of the republic, which would turn him into a symbol for all of the Egyptians: the president would not be the head of a political party and would not have any executive responsibilities. He would be limited to two terms in office. This section is very general and insufficiently detailed to reveal the Brotherhood's true view of where the presidency should fit in the Egyptian regime. The movement, though, did state its preference for a president who would not be associated with any political party. This notion was compatible with that of part of the Egyptian elite, who wanted to run famous Egyptians who were not associated with political parties as presidential candidates. Through this proposal, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to neutralize the president's link with the ruling party and turn the presidency into a symbolic—rather than executive—institution.

*11.* Removing the military from politics to enable it to focus on defending the country and to keep the government from exploiting the military, directly or indirectly, in order to tighten its control of society. The Minister of Defense would be a civilian politician like every other government minister. This is vital in the Muslim Brotherhood political thoughts to avoid a military coup in the future and to avoid any military role in politics.

*12.* The police and security forces would be obligated to play civilian roles, as prescribed by law, and to limit their role to defending the security of society and state—not to take advantage of it in order to maintain the regime's dominance or to suppress the opposition forces. They would not be allowed to intervene in public activities or elections. They would stand on equal footing and equal distance from all political forces.

*13.* Repeal of undemocratic laws, such as the Political Parties Law, the state-of-emergency regulations, the Trade Unions Law, and the Press Law. The movement suffered primarily from the first three laws, which limited its activities in all of its foci of power, especially the Trade Unions Law and the law that prevented it from becoming a legal political party.

*14.* Release of political prisoners and an end to the use of torture by the police and the security forces.

Regarding the proposed election reforms, the Muslim Brotherhood demanded that judges supervise elections by means of a special committee. The Supreme Judicial Council (a sort of constitutional court) would appoint judges to oversee elections, with no interference by the Minister of Justice. This proposal idea had been implemented by the regime for the 1990 elections; but the Minister of Justice and Minister of Interior, who were members of the ruling party, had their fingers in the pie and, according to the Brotherhood, influenced the results of the national elections.

With regard to the Christian Coptic minority, the Muslim Brotherhood reiterated the traditional nationalistic view that the Copts are an integral part of the Egyptian people. The platform put it this way: "We emphasize that our position regarding our Coptic brethren is fixed and unchanging, and is as follows: (1) they are part of Egyptian society, (2) they are partners in the homeland and in the collective national definition of all Egyptians, (3) their rights and responsibilities are the same as ours, (4) freedom of religion is guaranteed to all citizens, (5) we must fortify national unity and prevent any activity that could endanger this unity." This definition of Coptic by the Brotherhood is aiming at this stage to widen its mass movement and to avoid any international interference in the Egyptian internal affairs by exploiting the issue of religious minorities. This proposal was another step towards democratization in the Islamic political discourse in Egypt; the 2004 proposal was essentially based on the political platform that the Muslim Brotherhood had published in the mid-1990s.

What set the new platform apart, though, was its emphasis on freedoms rather than on the enforcement of Islamic law. This was because the Brotherhood believed that the implementation of these basic freedoms would eventually lead the Egyptian nation to choose *shari'a* as the law of the land. This point was emphasized by General Guide Mahdi 'Aqef in a newspaper interview:

The advancement of freedoms must precede the implementation of *shari'a.* Therefore, I say, freedom before *shari'a*. Whoever studies the writings of Imam Hassan al-Bana, the movement's founder, can see that the issue of freedoms is fundamental for us, because it would be impossible to implement Islamic law in the absence of a free atmosphere and popular willingness. The alternative to freedom is to impose *shari'a* through force and repression. This, however, goes against the principles of Islam. The Prophet's biography and the history of the spread of Islam never recorded a precedent of the enforcement of religious law through brutal force" .

### *Political Islam and Democracy after the 2011 Revolution*

The Islamic camp's support for the amendments to the Egyptian constitution enacted in March 2011, and its support for the political changes led by the military hierarchy intensified the concerns of the Islamists' opponents especially among the liberals and the leftists.

Their fears stemmed from the possibility that the Egyptian Islamists would win the first elections after the toppling of the Mubarak regime, because they were the best organized bloc and prepared for these elections. The winning of the elections, they knew, would exert direct influence on the nature of the new Egyptian constitution, because the parliament to be elected would appoint a constitutional council to draft it. A victory by the Islamic camp, therefore, would certainly influence the composition and nature of this council and its policy vis-à-vis the new constitution. They were concerned that the Islamists would opt for a more religious and less democratic and less liberal system than it had always demanded under the old regime.

The concerns expressed by some of the revolutionary leaders and secular parties intensified after the final decision by the Brotherhood's *Shura* Council that the movement would contest fifty percent of the seats in parliament—despite the fact that it had declared, on various occasions, that it would run for only thirty percent of the seats. This quota, however, did not apply to other Islamist parties that declared their intention of running for all parliament seats, such as the Islamic Group (*Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*) and the New Center Party (*Hizb al-Wasat*). This would result in Islamist control of the new parliament and influence the nature of the new regime to be established and then dictate new laws and legislations. In what follows we would like to present the Muslim Brotherhood's post-revolutionary political Islamic discourse (January-February 2011) and compare it to its discourse before the revolution. After the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood declared the establishment of a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, which would essentially serve as the Brotherhood's political arm but would also enjoy a large extent of organizational and even political autonomy vis-à-vis the mother movement . Nevertheless, the party would be based on the Muslim Brotherhood's political, social, and cultural ideology and the movement would wield influence in certain areas connected to the party's activity. In other words, this party will carry the Brotherhood movement all defining and governing principles.

The establishment of a political party separate from the Muslim Brotherhood can be seen as a compromise between the movement's two streams: the first wanted to turn the Brotherhood into a political party rather than leaving it as a voluntary association that promotes religion and engages in social and educational activities. The second and more traditional stream wanted the movement to remain an organization of the type launched by Hassan al-Bana and was opposed to turning the movement into a political party. The tension between the two streams had accompanied the Brotherhood since the 1970's. The issue had never been settled, though, because there had never been an urgent need to do so; the movement had never before been a political alternative to the authoritarian Egyptian regime.

The new situation in Egypt and the need to diffuse the tension within the Muslim Brotherhood led to the establishment of a political party that was separate from but affiliated with the movement. In this manner, the Brotherhood retained its status as a voluntary association while also establishing a party to satisfy the faction that sought greater involvement in the state's political life. Yet, by establishing this party the Muslim Brotherhood tacitly acknowledged that it was not interested in political power in its own right; the party would cater to all Egyptians who agreed with its platform and the governing principles.

Moreover, its members would not have to undergo the Muslim Brotherhood's religious vetting. In other words, anyone who accepted the party's political platform could be a member—even if they were not Muslims, not religious Muslims, or not identified ideologically with the Muslim Brotherhood's fundamental principles. After the party's launch, its chairman announced that more than a hundred Christian Copts had joined, including the author Rafiq Habib.

Following debates in the Muslim Brotherhood's *Shura* Council, the new party's political platform was approved. That is, the Brotherhood was responsible for drafting the party platform, for electing its chairman (who is, incidentally, a member of the movement), and for presenting the party's platform to the public. The platform comprises eight chapters; for our purposes, though, we will focus on the first two. The first article presents the party's values and vision while the second expounds the nature of the state and the regime. In the first chapter, which expounds the party's values and ideological basis, they note that: "The principles of Islamic law are the chief source of legislation … though non-Muslims are granted the right to be judged in accordance with their laws in matters of marriage and divorce and the broader social and personal sphere." The second political value was associated with the nature of the regime. This section stated: "*Shura* [an Islamic term that means consultation] is the essence of democracy and is the path to realizing the homeland's interests." In this section the movement attempts to attach religious overtones to the concept of democracy, tying the democratic regime to Islamic history's political and ethical value of *shura*.

In the fourth section, the party attempts links its political values with the social values that political Islam often exploits and takes pride in; that is, the association between political reform and moral reform: "The political and constitutional reform and moral reform are the springboards for reform in all areas of life." In any case, the theoretical basis emphasizes two political principles—justice and freedom; this explains the new party's name. The platform states: "Justice, freedom, and equality are man's God-given rights; therefore they are to be considered natural rights for all citizens, regardless of religion, sex, and color, on condition that the individual's liberty does not detract from the rights of others or those of the nation." But the expression "those of the nation" is never explained. Does it refer to the Egyptian nation or the entire Islamic *umma* (the nation)? It is also unclear what these individual rights are that, according to the Muslim Brotherhood's understanding, could "harm other people."

With regard to the subsection that deals with the new party's objectives (13 in all), we will briefly review the elements relevant to our discussion: achieving constitutional and political reforms and upholding general rights, especially the right of association, both to form political parties and to establish civil-society institutions. The nation, the platform asserts, is the source of governance. This principle is revolutionary for the fundamentalist school of political Islam, which staunchly maintains that Allah is the sole source of governance (*al- hakimiya li allah*). The latter approach was advanced by Sayyid Qutb in his various books, where he stated that only Allah, and not the people, could be the source of governance. For this reason, he strongly objected to democratic or parliamentary regimes.  The platform also discusses the party's mission to disseminate and internalize Islam's authentic values and morality as principles for organizing the life of the individual and of society in general, while upholding the supremacy of the law and building a state based on modern democratic institutions and just developmental agendas.

In the second chapter, "The State: Basic Principles" the platform details its vision of the character of the state and the regime. The concept of the state advocated by the platform is based on the Islamic understanding of the term. The chapter opens with the statement: "Islam has conceived a model for the state, its basic principles, and supporting pillars." The platform does not differentiate between the concepts of state and regime, inexplicably interchanging both terms. For example, the following text appears under the rubric "Type of State": "The Freedom and Justice Party maintains that the parliamentary regime is most compatible with Egypt's conditions, because this type of regime is based on a moderate separation of powers and on cooperation between the judicial branch and the executive branch." The Muslim Brotherhood's support of a parliamentary regime sheds light on its decision not to put up a candidate for president: the movement believes that the Egyptian regime should be parliamentary and not presidential, as it has been up until now. This, of course, will influence Egypt's new constitution, now that the Islamic camp has won a majority in the first elections after Mubarak's fall.

Another subsection, "Characteristics of the State" lists four of them: (1) The state upholds the principle of citizenship; this section states that "Egypt is the state of all of its citizens … who enjoy equal rights and obligations." (2) It is a constitutional state that maintains a separation of powers. (3) It is a state based on *shura* (consultation), which is a basic principle of the state, because democracy is the regime most compatible with the principles of *shura.* (4) It is a civil state. Under the fourth principle, the platform states: "The Islamic state is, in essence, a civil state and not a military state controlled and ruled by the military"; a civil state "is not a theocracy in which clergymen rule.

There are no ordained clergymen in Islam; rather there are enlightened individuals who specialize in religion. There are no rulers by divine right and there are no persons who have the exclusive right to interpret the Quran and its religious precepts and to claim full authority on the Prophet *Hadeeth* (words and deeds of Prophet Mohammed PBUH)." The Muslim Brotherhood offers a different interpretation of the civil state than do the Egyptian liberals, as expressed by one of the latter's leaders.  That is, the Brotherhood refers to a "civil state" as one that is not a military state nor a theocracy; but it is not a liberal state in the sense used in secular Egyptian discourse, meaning a democracy in which there is a separation of religion and state. In its platform, the Muslim Brotherhood expounds its concept of a state at the end of the subsection about the civil state: "The difference between an Islamic state and various other forms of government is its basis in the religious law that most of the Egyptian people believe in. This law, in addition to its ethical and religious dimensions, organizes all aspects of Muslim life … while safeguarding the right of non-Muslims to employ their own religious laws in matters of marriage and divorce."

That is, the Muslim Brotherhood's platform champions Islamic law as the theoretical basis for a civil state in all domains; non-Muslims must return to their own religious law only in matters of marriage and divorce, but not for issues linked with the public political, cultural, or social spheres. In summary, the Muslim Brotherhood's political platform mentions equality, equal opportunity, citizenship, the supremacy of law, separation of powers, a democratic regime, and civil state; nevertheless, it states that the Egyptian state must be based on Islamic law, both as the chief source of legislation and as the principle that organizes the private and public spheres.

## *Discussion and Concluding Remarks*

In this article, we addressed the issue of political Islam's challenge to democratization in the wake of the January-February 2011 revolution. We built on a textual analysis of two political platforms that the Muslim Brotherhood published, before and after the revolution. It is not the intention here to challenge the Brotherhood's platforms or their conceptualizations by means of political theory and democratic thought. Rather, we believe that the use of political concepts in the two platforms is not based on the political theory with regard to issues of democracy and citizenship. We will relate to this conceptualization in the platforms from the perspective of their authors and intellectual followers, and not the theoretical framework familiar from the existing literature.

There are a number of differences between the two platforms (published in 2004 and 2011). The first significant one relates to the essence of the state and not only to the political regime: in the first platform, the movement focused on its demand for more democracy and political freedom. After the revolution, though, it placed the state itself, and not only the regime, at the center. It holds that the Egyptian state should become a civil state—not in the liberal sense of the word, but in the sense of a state run by civilians. This change is linked primarily with the goals of the two platforms. The first addressed political changes within an authoritarian regime; therefore, its demands for change were less extreme. The second platform, however, aims as the formation of a new regime after the fall of Mubarak's, when the movement identified its opportunity to influence the creation of a new polity in which Islamic law would be a working element.

The first platform was a response to the movement's limited room for political maneuver, in the shadow of the authoritarian regime. The second was drafted with much more political leeway, in as much as the Muslim Brotherhood was aware of its new political opportunity, as a well-organized political force, following the revolution. The post-revolutionary platform placed greater emphasis on Islamic law as the legal basis for the emerging regime. This is also manifested in the Brotherhood's position in the political debate about the relative priority of holding elections or drafting a new constitution.

The Islamist stream in general, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, considers elections to be a prerequisite for drafting a new constitution; the secular camp, on the other hand, would draft the constitution before holding elections. This stresses the greater politicization of the second platform as opposed to the first. One might argue that the first platform was directed more towards Egyptian society and less towards the regime; it was drafted in response to social unrest, at a time when people wanted to know where the Muslim Brotherhood was headed. In contrast, the second platform focused more on the state, because it was intended to influence the Egypt's future political and governmental structure; hence it was more practical and less polemical. The state was a main issue in the second platform, whereas society and the stood at the center of the first.

That is, in the first platform, the Muslim Brotherhood's sphere for political activity was primarily within society and the existing regime; in the second platform, however, its political activity also targets the regime and the very nature of the state. This is why the Muslim Brotherhood supported holding elections before drafting a new constitution, because the opposite sequence would diminish its ability to introduce political changes. In conclusion, the Muslim Brotherhood in post-revolutionary Egypt found itself facing the challenge of democracy—but no longer as an intellectual exercise and not only in order to gain public sympathy and support. In the wake of the revolution, there is a good chance that the Muslim Brotherhood will become part of the executive branch, not only the legislature. One of the movement's responsibilities, as part of the new regime that will emerge before our very eyes in the near future, will be to propose a model of a political party that is involved in the transition to a democracy and can live together under one roof, as part as the same regime, with streams that are politically and ideologically opposed to the Brotherhood's path. The discussions conducted to date testify to the serious pragmatism of the Brotherhood's perception of the political world and of its opportunity to become part of a competitive system. Of course, we are now only at the beginning of the process; we must wait to see what eventuates, and whether the changes within the Muslim Brotherhood become permanent.

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